



NEIGHBORHOOD STRINGS

2024-25 Family Handbook



Neighborhood Strings

323 Main St, Worcester MA, 01608 | www.WorcesterChamberMusic.org | 508-926-8624

Welcome to Neighborhood Strings!

Neighborhood Strings, a program of the Worcester Chamber Music Society, is an intensive music program open to youth from the Main South and Downtown neighborhoods. Young people in the program receive instruments, lessons and ensemble in violin, viola and cello. Students also meet guest artists, attend concerts, and have the chance to perform often throughout the year.

Neighborhood Strings builds our community by creating strong relationships and giving everyone a voice. Making music together is a transformative experience. Our programs are meant to strengthen life skills for our young people: responsibility, respect, teamwork, communication, and trust.

Staff:

Ariana Falk – Cello, Education Director

Debby Greenebaum – Violin, Associate Program Director

Peter Sulski – Violin/Viola, Ensemble Director

Rohan Gregory – Violin/Viola

Susan Kirchhausen – Violin/Viola

Patrick Chatham – Cello

Gerdie Jean Louis – Violin/Viola

Judy Docimo – After-school Supervisor

Tracy Kraus – Executive Director

Cost

There is a \$50 fee for the year for participation - \$25 in the fall and \$25 in the winter/spring. The program is accessible to all and nobody will be excluded due to cost. Fee waivers are available.

Instrument Care

Each child receives a violin, viola or cello on loan, as well as a case and bow.

String instruments are both fragile and valuable. Each family should take responsibility for keeping the instrument safe:

- Never leave an instrument in the car, even for a few minutes. They are easy targets for theft as well as very sensitive to hot and cold.
- Keep the instrument in the case at all times when not playing
- Find a safe place in the house for the instrument away from pets, siblings and spills
- We understand that instruments can be accidentally damaged. If this happens, please return it to us as soon as possible. **If your instrument is lost or not returned for any other reason, you may be responsible for a portion of the cost (\$450-\$1,000).** There is a minimum fee of \$10 for a damaged instrument.

Attendance

Part of having fun and making progress is being present! Students are expected to attend **all** lessons and ensemble rehearsals. For most students, this will be 2-5 days a week. If a child has to miss a lesson or class for any reason, **please let your child's private teacher know in advance** (by 10am of that day). Contact information is at the end of this handbook. Students will only be allowed to stay in the program if they maintain good attendance. **In general, we have a "3 strikes and you're out" policy: miss 3 lessons without communicating and your spot in the program may be jeopardized.**

Location

All lessons and classes will take place either at the Main South Community Development Corporation (Main South CDC), Woodland Academy, Learning First Charter Public School, or Clark Street Community School. Location info for concerts and special events is distributed before each event.

Private Lessons

Lessons are the heart of Neighborhood Strings. Resident musicians teach individual and small-group lessons in violin, viola, and cello during after-school hours. Neighborhood Strings provides all participants with instruments to keep throughout the school year. **Please pick up your children promptly when classes are over.**

Practicing

Neighborhood Strings students will be expected to practice their instruments **at home** on days when they don't have class. At first, this can be 10-30 minutes a day, and five days a week is a good goal.

Parents can help students practice at home with encouragement and reminders. Each child should find a special time and place to play his or her instrument at home. Please don't hesitate to ask your child's teacher if you would like to learn more about helping your child practice at home.

Mentors and Practice Buddies

Neighborhood Strings will match students with mentors who are college and high school students or other mentors from the community. Mentors will meet with

students after school before or after lessons and assist in ensembles. They also lead activities and can help with homework.

Ensemble Each weekday afternoon, we offer 2-3 levels of ensemble (group playing) available to all students beyond the first-year “Green Group.” The “Blue Notes” group is basic ensemble appropriate for 2nd and 3rd year of study. The “Silver Strings” is more advanced, appropriate for all levels through high school. Blue Note and Silver Strings ensembles take place every weekday at the Main South CDC on the schedule below. We encourage students to come to additional ensemble days to make quicker progress on their instruments.

Main South CDC: Monday - Friday Blue Notes/Silver Strings 4:00-5:00

Learning First Ensemble: Tuesday & Friday 2:30-3:30

N.S. Club (7th grade and up only)

Older Neighborhood Strings students are invited to participate in the teen leadership club. The N.S. Club members have the opportunity to play extra chamber music, discussions, meals, and occasional extra field trips around Worcester. They are expected to be leaders to their younger peers in the program. The philosophy of the program is, “if you know something, teach someone else!”

Student Performances

Throughout the year, students and teachers will perform as soloists and in ensembles for our community of parents, neighbors, students, and musicians.

Performance Parties will be open to everyone and include pizza or a potluck meal. We strongly encourage parents to attend all performances as a celebration of music, of community, and of the achievements of our young people.

Concert Trips for Entire Families

Students and families will occasionally be invited to attend concerts in Worcester by their teachers and other local musicians. Neighborhood Strings will provide free tickets and sometimes transportation for our students and their families. A concert trip is a great chance for a family to learn about the musical language that their child is studying, and it is a student's chance to see great performers in the musical world they are part of as violinists, violists and cellists.

Parent Communication

We communicate regularly about schedule, student absences, and special events. The best place for the most current information is the Neighborhood Strings WhatsApp group:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/LaW8hbtY94I7RA7V8RZGJc>

We also send out periodic text messages and emails so please make sure your child is registered for the program and we have your most current contact information.

Non-Violence and Respect Policy

Neighborhood Strings maintains a policy of respect and non-violence among all students. Any violation of this policy could jeopardize a student's spot in the program.

Parent Volunteering

All activities in the program are free, but in return **we ask parents to volunteer at some events**. This could be at a performance parties, concert trips, or helping out with daily practice time and lessons. There is also a Parent Council that helps to

plan events! Please contact one of the chairs if you are interested in helping to plan events: Katia Norford - 508-304-4932 or Dickens Pierre-Louis - 781-258-9138

Contact:

All questions and concerns at any time can go to Ariana Falk, Program Director for Neighborhood Strings, or Debby Greenebaum, Associate Program Director. For quickest on-site contact at the CDC, please contact Judy Docimo, After-School Supervisor.

Ariana Falk:

Phone/Text: 203-464-4924 Email: ariana@worcesterchambermusic.org

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